



# General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

6th meeting

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Geneva

Official Records

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Douri (Iraq), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

## Agenda item 8 (continued)

### Proposals for further initiatives for social development

- (a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development
- (b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Ermoshin, Prime Minister of Belarus.

**Mr. Ermoshin** (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Copenhagen Summit started a new stage of cooperation between the Governments of United Nations Member States in the sphere of social development. It promoted the establishment of social peace and stability, thus proving the commitment of the United Nations to the strategy of improving human living conditions.

In the course of transforming its economy, the Republic of Belarus is making active use of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Copenhagen Summit. It is taking into account the

positive experiences of other countries that are reforming their economies. Each country has its own specific features, both in the economic field and as regards social policies. For Belarus, the transition from a rigidly centralized economy to a market economy has turned out to be a difficult ordeal.

For us, the Chernobyl disaster is a wound that has not healed. More than 70 per cent of the total area contaminated with radiation lies within our country. Experts estimate the damage suffered by the Republic to equal 32 times our annual gross domestic product.

We appreciate the United Nations implementation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) programme for Chernobyl, which has made it possible for us to slightly ease the hardships caused by the tragedy. We remain hopeful that this work will be continued. On behalf of the Government of Belarus, I express our sincere gratitude to the charitable organizations from Germany, Italy, Japan, Greece and other countries that have assisted those who suffered from the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. I would like to add that everything that has been done to date has enabled us to make a great deal of progress, but still the consequences of the catastrophe at the nuclear power plant will affect not only the Republic of Belarus, but also other, neighbouring countries for decades and centuries to come. In this connection, I would like to ask the international community, for the good of other countries of the world, to unite its efforts to help the

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Republic of Belarus to overcome the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

The costs related to the elimination of conventional weapons in line with international treaties also greatly taxed the economy of Belarus. However — despite its current problems, and unfortunately with scant help from the States members of international organizations — our Republic has completely fulfilled its obligations to the international community in this area.

Our national model for development is a socially oriented market economy that allows for the combination of private initiative and competition with active State involvement, and for the combination of economic efficiency with a high level of social protection for the citizens.

The period between 1996 and 1999 was decisive for the socio-economic development of the Republic of Belarus, as during this crucial stage crisis phenomena occurring in the country in the previous period were overcome. During those four years, the gross domestic product rose by 27 per cent and industrial output increased by 51 per cent. Our efforts to ensure economic growth facilitated the improvement of the labour market. The unemployed now make up only 2 per cent of all economically active members of the population.

Several indicators of the population's living standards have improved. Real wages increased by 150 per cent during those four years, and during the first five months of this year they rose by 16 per cent, as compared to the same period last year. With the assistance of the State, over those four years more than 145,000 families improved their housing conditions.

The Republic of Belarus ensures balanced development in the social spheres related to all aspects of life.

Reform of the educational system is ongoing. The Republic has achieved a reasonably high level of adult literacy — more than 98 per cent. With 262 university students per 10,000 residents, the Republic of Belarus is on a par with the average European level. Today we are exercising the right to education more actively than ever before. The State has managed to maintain the level of budgetary funds allocated to educational needs at 6.6 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The tasks of the Republic for the next five years are to approximate the developed countries' level of consumption of goods and services, to ensure rational employment and to meet international standards for social protection. Income policy will be aimed at increasing the minimum level of State social and labour guarantees, which should be truly consonant with the minimum necessary living costs. Our task is to raise State standards step-by-step so that they increasingly approach the level of subsistence wages.

In the near future, as part of pension reform, the plan is to introduce an individualized accounting system of social security contributions and to streamline the early-retirement procedure through the establishment of an occupational pension system for those working under special conditions and for selected types of professional activity. We have a number of benefits for veterans and disabled persons.

Families, maternal care and the protection of children remain central concerns of our social policy.

In recent years, the volume of pollutants emitted into our atmosphere has been reduced. The country's territory is free of both chemical and nuclear weapons. In this regard, we are one of the countries to willingly renounce its nuclear Power status.

The international community has arrived at the conclusion that one of its major tasks is to extend comprehensive assistance to the countries undergoing transformation to market economies. We are satisfied to note that the draft final document of the General Assembly's special session contains provisions that respond to the concerns of the countries in economic transition, including Belarus. We very sincerely support this initiative.

I would also like to stress the significant role played by the regional symposium on social and economic policy in the period of macroeconomic stabilization in countries in economic transition, which was held at Ashkabad in 1999. The analysis of the current situation in these countries and the specific recommendations will be taken into account in Belarus's social and economic policy.

I am certain that this special session will ensure that international cooperation in all its forms will be engaged so that effective social policy satisfying national needs and the interests of every individual can be implemented.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Prime Minister of Belarus for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon.

**President Biya** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Assembly. Allow me also to thank the authorities and people of Switzerland for their outstanding welcome and hospitality.

Five years ago, gathered at Copenhagen on the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development, we set out together in the Declaration and Programme of Action the principles and major guidelines for social progress for the years ahead — progress the need for which no one doubted. That consensus, which was remarkable in itself, rolled back the idea that social disparity sprang from some sort of inherent flaw in human societies. Of course, we were under no delusions. We knew that it would not be enough for us to analyse and condemn social ills to make them disappear, as if by magic. We were not unaware that it would be necessary to grapple with them with courage and determination.

Where are we five years after Copenhagen? What has become of the solemn commitments that were undertaken in the capital of Denmark? Answering those questions is the very purpose of this special session of the General Assembly that has brought us here to Geneva.

Let me say outright that despite the laudable efforts that have been made by numerous Governments, we remain far off the mark. Let me recall some of the commitments made: full employment, social integration, access for all to education and health care, equality between men and women and so on. These problems are outstanding challenges for which we will have to find new solutions by employing new methods that take into account the globalization of trade — or, to put it another way, of globalization itself.

But I would like to emphasize, as I did five years ago, a point that is particularly close to my heart. While social inequality, often to a shocking degree, exists in every one of our countries, be they rich or poor, there is still one element of disparity that is even more intolerable: the social divide that separates the North from the South. And when I say the South, I am

thinking specifically of Africa, with regard to which one of the Copenhagen commitments provided for the need to accelerate development.

Let me be clearly understood. It is not for me to criticize or accuse anyone. I remain convinced that Africans hold their destiny in their own hands and that they must above all rely on their own will to emerge from underdevelopment. I recognize that international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, to cite just a few, as well as our bilateral partners, whom I would like to take this opportunity to thank, have provided us, and continue to provide us, with considerable and selfless support. However, I also know that if we want to succeed, that support, like our own efforts, must be commensurate with the problems that Africa continues to face. Those problems include the inequality in the terms of trade, the crushing debt burden, widespread endemic disease, civil and inter-State wars, population displacements, natural disasters, malnutrition, poor governance, corruption and so forth.

While some of these ills are, if I may say so, within the purview of African Governments, it is clear that the most of them will be solved only by exercising international solidarity. Is it really conceivable for our continent to continue to lag perpetually behind the rest of the world in economic development, the factor that that brings about social progress? It is a moral imperative for the international community not to let Africa become marginalized. It is also obviously in its best interest not to let this happen.

As we all know, underdevelopment and the poverty that goes along with it generate political and social instability and therefore lead to potential threats to peace and security. But along other lines, let us recall that poverty is clearly the root cause of the waves of immigration from the South that are crashing upon rich countries. Social development is therefore not only a priority for all of us; it is an imperative.

Despite the frequent difficulties in reconciling economic constraints with the demands of social development, Cameroon has endeavoured in recent years to place those demands in their rightful context. It has been assisted in doing this by the establishment of a favourable political environment, the return of growth, the control of inflation and, as I would like to stress once again, by the aid it has received from its foreign partners. Among those efforts, I would first

mention the preservation of peace, security and stability, the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

I would also like to mention the adoption and implementation of the 1998 Declaration on a national strategy to combat poverty; the Declaration on a sectoral health policy and the framework law on health, which emphasizes combating epidemics; the 1998 law on school guidelines and the sectoral educational strategy currently being finalized; the national plan of action on nutrition and the food security programme; the national policy document on employment that is now being completed; the new urban strategy; the national governance programme; and the programme to fight corruption.

As can be seen, the promotion of human dignity is at the centre of our concerns. Of course, actions have been undertaken to implement the measures adopted. There has been, in particular, a marked increase in the rate of schooling, which by 1996 had already risen to 75 per cent and which will improve further following the Government's decision to make public primary education free of charge.

Furthermore, medical coverage has been considerably strengthened through the creation of numerous health centres and a national centre to provide essential medicines.

As for the unemployment rate, although it is still high, it is progressively falling as growth begins again. Finally, significant initiatives have been launched, with the people's participation, so as to ensure the social integration of the most vulnerable strata of society.

Of course, we must recognize that we still have a huge task before us. But we are determined to continue our efforts. As I said in Copenhagen — I hope the Assembly will forgive me for repeating what I said then — social development and remains the ultimate objective of our economic growth. It is a matter of equity and a requirement for national solidarity.

This is what guides our action. Hence, it goes without saying that, faithful to the ideals of the United Nations, we abide by the principles and guidelines of the Draft Declaration and Programme of Action.

I, personally, have no doubt that these meetings, inspired by the spirit of human dignity and social justice and the need for international solidarity, will be

a landmark and will justify the hopes that our peoples have placed in them.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President of Cameroon for his statement. I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Gia Khiem, Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam.

**Mr. Pham Gia Khiem** (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, I wish to convey to the President of the General Assembly, and to all the representatives attending this special session of the General Assembly on social development, our warmest greetings.

The Vietnamese delegation shares the assessments reflected in the draft document on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action. We are of the view that the most prominent result so far has been the consensus reached by the international community on the importance of social development, and the higher priority that countries are giving to social development in pursuit of their overall development objectives and policies.

The success of the international conference on the 20/20 initiative, which the Government of Viet Nam had the honour to host in Hanoi in October 1998, constitutes a vivid manifestation of the international community's awareness of the importance of social development. We note with satisfaction that in recent years, many countries have formulated and successfully implemented poverty reduction, job creation and social integration programmes, thus improving their peoples' living conditions and having a positive impact on social development.

However, many challenges and difficulties remain for each country, and for the international community as a whole, to overcome. We are witnessing the widening gap between rich and poor within and among countries. Many developing countries are lagging further behind. Wars and ethnic and religious conflicts have been using up our national resources, which otherwise could be used for social development. At a time when knowledge-based economies are contributing more and more to the growth of the world economy, in many developing countries fewer than 50 per cent of children go to school. A large part of the world's population continues to live with hunger and in poverty. In addition to all of those considerations, the lack of education and unemployment is becoming

fertile soil for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other social evils such as drug addiction, corruption, smuggling and organized crime.

In this context, the Vietnamese delegation holds that the need to strengthen international solidarity and cooperation in resolving the pressing social issues of nations and striving for social development has truly become more important and urgent than ever. Such solidarity and cooperation are essential in efforts aimed at reforming international institutions and trade, investment, intellectual property, environmental and other regimes in order to make them equitable and non-discriminatory in order to render effective assistance and services to the developing and least developed countries.

In the same spirit of solidarity and cooperation, the developed countries should provide preferential treatment for developing countries in market access, technology transfers and debt restructuring, reduction and cancellation. While expressing our great appreciation to those developed countries which have been living up to the commitment to reserve at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance, we appeal to the others to do likewise. The Vietnamese delegation hopes that the final document of this special session will be one of international solidarity and cooperation. I believe that that would be a success.

The Vietnamese Government continues to believe that just social policies, in pursuit of happiness for the people, constitute a strong driving force to release the people's creativity in nation-building. Our fundamental and consistent approach to socio-economic policies is to link economic growth with social justice. State investment in social sectors keeps increasing, accounting for more than 25 per cent of annual State budgets, with special priority given to investment in poverty reduction, job creation, education and other basic social services. As a result, the poverty rate was reduced from 20 per cent in 1995 to 11 per cent in 2000. In the year 2000, objectives in the elimination of illiteracy and the universalization of primary education have been achieved nationwide. Over 90 per cent of the population has access to health-care services. The population growth rate has been brought down from 1.8 per cent to the present 1.53 per cent, and in 1999 Vietnam was selected for the United Nations Population Award for this success. Sixty per cent of households have access to clean water; 80 per cent of

the nation's territory is reached by television programmes and 90 per cent by radio broadcasts. The livelihood of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups has improved substantially, and hence they have become better integrated into the national community.

The Vietnamese Government is at present in the process of defining the socio-economic development strategy for the period 2001-2010. Even though the country remains poor, with an unbalanced budget and limited financial resources, in the formulation of strategies we will continue to give high priority to social development, especially to the promotion of education and training, which is aimed at enhancing the people's knowledge, developing human resources and nurturing talent. We will concentrate our utmost efforts on promoting broad participation by the entire society, especially mass organizations, in the process of social development. The same efforts will be made to improve the legal system and on administrative reform.

In conclusion, from this rostrum I wish to express our gratitude to countries, international organizations — especially those in the United Nations system — and non-governmental organizations the world over for their valuable assistance and cooperation during recent years, which we hope to further enjoy.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wen Jiabao, Vice-Premier of the State Council of China.

**Mr. Wen Jiabao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the threshold of the new century, we have gathered, as scheduled, in the picturesque city of Geneva to jointly review the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, to summarize the achievements and experience of different countries in the area of social development and to hold discussions on how to realize, in the process of economic globalization, social development that benefits all the peoples of the world. We are convinced that, with the concerted efforts of all the delegations here, this session will be a success.

Looking back over the five years since the World Summit for Social Development, we have noticed with delight that in recent years the issue of social development has received more attention from the international community than ever before, and that it has been given increasingly greater priority in the national development strategies of various countries.

National actions and international cooperation aimed at poverty eradication, expansion of employment and greater social integration have been constantly reinforced. Progress has been made in the social development of various countries of the world, though to varying degrees.

However, we have to be soberly aware that global social development still falls short of expectations. With regional conflicts and local wars breaking out from time to time, people in some countries and regions still suffer from the scourge of war and turmoil. The gap in wealth between the North and the South continues to widen, with developing countries facing grim challenges. The portion of the world's population living in poverty has become bigger, leaving many people with no basic means for survival and development. These cold facts tell us that global social development is a long, uphill battle calling for protracted and unremitting efforts from all Governments, peoples and the international community. The Chinese Government is ready to work vigorously with other countries for the cause of global social progress.

To this end, I would like to emphasize the following four points on behalf of the Chinese Government: first, it is the shared responsibility of the entire human race to safeguard peace and promote development. As humankind enters the new century, peace and development remain the two major themes of the world. A peaceful and stable international environment is the prerequisite for humankind's social development. China maintains that international affairs should be handled in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and that every country has an obligation to safeguard peace. The past century has seen monumental achievements, unmatched in history, in the social development of human society. It is a sacred mission for the Governments and the peoples of the world to achieve greater economic and social development and to seek common progress and prosperity for humankind in the new century.

Secondly, the right of a country to choose independently its path of development in the light of its specific conditions should be respected. We live in a diverse and colourful world. Given the differences among countries in terms of environment, history, cultural tradition and social system, and the disparities in their economic development levels, it is impossible

to ask all countries to adopt the same development model. The world's diversity should be respected. The principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs should be upheld. The affairs of a country should be up to its own people to decide, and developing countries should have the right to choose, in the light of their own conditions, a development path tailored to their specific national characteristics.

Thirdly, economic globalization urgently calls for the establishment of a fair and reasonable new international economic order. Economic globalization is an inevitable trend of economic development, and it brings new opportunities to countries of the world. Nonetheless, due to the hardened irrational international economic order, the globalization process has failed to benefit all countries evenly. To truly realize a form of social progress that benefits all requires the establishment of a fair and reasonable new international economic order. Countries, big or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are all equal members of the international family, and all have the right to take part in the discussion and formulation of the "rules of the game" for international affairs. The reasonable propositions and demands of developing countries should be accorded adequate attention. In this connection, international organizations, and the United Nations in particular, should play an even bigger role. Developed countries should, by taking into account the common interests of humankind, resolve the debt issue of the poverty-stricken countries in an equitable and reasonable manner and provide developing countries with capital and technical assistance without attaching any political strings.

Fourthly, economic and social development remains a central task for the developing countries. Poverty and unemployment are acute problems for them. The key to their solution lies in economic development. It is a major task for human society, in its march into the new century, to enable developing countries to achieve growth and prosperity.

This task calls for assistance and support from the international community and, more important, for efforts by the developing countries themselves. They must keep abreast of the times, adopt carefully designed development strategies, always maintain social stability, seize opportunities, accelerate development, reverse their backwardness once and for

all and create a better tomorrow by relying on the hard work of all their peoples.

Over the past five years, the Chinese Government has made an effort to fulfil the commitments it made at the World Summit for Social Development. China has achieved sustained, rapid and sound economic development and has made progress in the areas of education, science, technology, health and sports, and in other social spheres. Through years of hard work, 1.25 billion Chinese people have made a historic leap from subsistence to a relatively comfortable life. The Chinese Government has given special attention to eliminating poverty and has succeeded, mainly by its own efforts, in reducing the size of the impoverished rural population from 250 million in 1978 to 34 million in 1999. By the end of this year, we will be able to roughly meet the basic needs of our impoverished rural people.

The Chinese Government also pays much attention to the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of the disabled. Over the past five years, the percentage of disabled children going to school has risen from 20 per cent to more than 70 per cent, and that of disabled people holding jobs from 67 per cent to more than 73 per cent. Rehabilitation services for the disabled have also developed considerably.

The development and progress of China — the world's largest developing country — constitute an important contribution to world social development. China may encounter many difficulties and challenges on its road towards development. Population and employment pressures, poverty, the gap between urban and rural populations and among different regions, and increasingly acute resource and environmental constraints are among the problems that we are faced with. We do not underestimate the difficulties, and we have the confidence, determination and capability to tackle these problems on the path to development.

At the dawn of the new century, mankind is looking forward to a beautiful future. It is the shared wish of the world's peoples to consign war, hunger and poverty to past history and to see peace, prosperity and progress prevail in the new century. The Chinese Government and the Chinese people stand ready to work tirelessly with all the world's other Governments and peoples for the attainment of that goal.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will next hear a statement by Her Excellency

Ms. Orlanda Santos Ferreira, Minister for Employment, Training and Special Education of Cape Verde.

**Ms. Santos Ferreira** (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from French text provided by the delegation*): One of the key features of the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development was its timing. Just a few years after the outset of a new era in international life, which began in the 1990s, the pace of globalization had accelerated considerably. It soon became clear that in its economic dimension — which was the most visible aspect and the one with the greatest impact — it could not be slowed, much less halted, which aroused great uncertainty and insecurity in many countries and within broad sectors of the societies of those countries and elsewhere.

As a political act, the 1995 Copenhagen conference was remarkable because, on a massive scale and at the highest level, it made it clear that the social dimension of development could never be viewed as a delayed product of economic success, or even as its concomitant by-product. Social development was unambiguously affirmed as a goal in itself, in a break from its status in the 1980s, when it was only social variables that were taken into account in promoting development.

Five years later, the present special session has been convened to assess the period since Copenhagen by drawing the most relevant lessons and reviewing and renewing the appropriate strategies for attaining our objectives. We now view those objectives in a clearer perspective, because the quest for development for all is here being addressed in the context of a world in the process of globalization.

The exercise in which we are now engaged is marked by the inherent complexity of a subject about which we are still learning, and which also continues to be affected by the long-standing controversy about the roles and responsibilities of national and international plans. The political declaration we are to adopt will recognize that, in general, Governments, international organizations and civil society have made ongoing efforts to increase social well-being. Yet the results of those efforts remain insufficient and unequal.

Looking at the key themes of the Copenhagen commitments, such as the elimination of poverty, full employment and social integration, we can see that progress made on poverty in some places contrasts with a decline in other societies, and that in two areas great

disparities persist or have grown worse: on employment, any modest gains that have been achieved are precarious and unequal; and social integration, which depends on factors including poverty and employment as well as on many others, seems to be an increasingly difficult area.

Five years is certainly not a very long time in terms of assessing the impact of the Copenhagen summit in changing the worldwide social scenario. But our perception at this stage gives rise to serious concern, because we seem to be making an uphill effort. It does not look as if the battle is being won.

My country, Cape Verde, faces many obstacles to development, such as its status as a least developed small island State that has been victim of a lengthy drought. Nonetheless, it has long been devoting a considerable share of its institutional energy, budgetary resources and investment to the social sector. Cape Verde's rates of poverty and extreme poverty are 30 per cent and 14 per cent respectively; the unemployment rate is nearing 25 per cent. But our policies have still enabled Cape Verde to make important social gains over the years, with life expectancy rising to between 70 and 71 years, and rates of primary and secondary school enrolment to nearly 100 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.

At present, these gains continue to be supported by official development assistance, but the positive trend in Cape Verde's economic indicators is being seen as justification for withdrawing the assistance granted by our long-standing international partners. This premature withdrawal, if it takes place, will have an economic and social impact that runs counter to the objectives of the commitments and Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen.

Today we recognize how inextricably linked are the objectives of economic growth, social development, rehabilitation of the environment, and peace and security. All of the elements are necessary for a human society to succeed. We are not free to choose one or two priorities, in the hope of succeeding regardless. Only one strategy can work: joint and synergetic action on all fronts simultaneously.

In addition to this important prerequisite for success, there is another question, just as vital, concerning the nature and reality of global interdependence.

While we subscribe to the accepted view of globalization as giving rise to unprecedented risks and opportunities, we believe in its fundamental ability to show us, gradually and inexorably, how the progress and even survival of all is interlinked. Indeed, it is only through a more integrated globalization framework that we will be able to put to the test the concept of international community as we have been articulating it strongly for decades, as well as its premise; interdependence on the basis of networks.

Because of the limitations encountered in terms of solidarity and of the nature of so-called free trade, sustained and consistent political will on the part of humankind is still lacking. This goal can be achieved, however, if interdependence, with globalization as a catalyst, becomes an increasingly clear imperative. The concept of international community must go beyond the stage of a politically correct idea that is of no consequence to governance at any level and be translated into an increasingly dynamic reality. Only then will it finally provide the key to a kind of cooperation that does not yet exist — a cooperation to which all involved must be committed unreservedly.

It would be difficult to address social issues adequately in the absence of a sound economic framework, at both the national and international levels. Furthermore, in a developing country, no external force can replace the impetus provided by the unfettered dynamism of its own social forces. Only a deliberate choice on the part of a society, along with the necessary action, can give rise to that impetus. However, we cannot expect the efforts of such a society to bear sustainable fruit in the context of an external environment that provides no incentives or beneficial interaction and that may even cause it harm through a relationship based on inequality.

It is becoming abundantly clear that in the context of ever-increasing globalization, unprecedented efforts must be made in the area of international relations. Such efforts are a key priority and will help strengthen the effectiveness and lasting nature of the resources, policies and measures that are used to enhance social progress and development at all levels throughout the world.

In our country, every day we must attempt to compromise between, on the one hand, economic reform and improvements to the public sector, and, on the other, the provision of affordable goods and

services as a matter of political responsibility for social well-being. In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that we must not confuse the means with the end and that the end is not economics but humanity.

We are confident that in the wake of the Copenhagen Summit, this important session will provide a strong impetus in the right direction.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Zobaïda Jalal, Minister for Education, Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education of Pakistan.

**Mrs. Jalal** (Pakistan): I am grateful for this opportunity to address this twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. In view of the time constraint, I have circulated the complete text of my statement, which is being distributed in this room by the Secretariat.

In the closing decade of the last century, world leaders met at Copenhagen and envisioned that the international community would work together for the attainment of conditions in which the equitable development of all peoples is ensured.

Yet the goal that inspired us at Copenhagen remains elusive. For an unacceptably large number of men and women, the world remains as it was — a place marked by deprivation and misery, devoid of opportunities and even hope. This has happened against the backdrop of profound changes in the global economy. Vast productive forces have been unleashed, and yet the social indicators remain abysmal. Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, three fifths have no access to basic sanitation; almost one third are without safe drinking water; and one quarter lack adequate housing. The number of people living in absolute poverty has not declined.

Why is this so? Why is it that despite repeated assertions that the international community will not tolerate the perpetuation of want and misery, we continue to be confronted with the tragedy of persistent poverty?

The answer is not too difficult. At Copenhagen, the international community had recognized that in order to sustain social justice it was necessary to have broad-based and sustained economic growth. This was an acknowledgement of the simple fact that enunciating social goals is not enough — there must also be the ability to pay for these goals. Most

countries lack this ability, for the benefits of recent developments have been grotesquely lopsided. The benefits of globalization are definitely not global but remain stubbornly limited and local.

Broad-based growth can be ensured. Resources can be generated that would permit funding for social programmes by all countries. But this requires a number of measures, including the following.

First, international trade rules should evolve in a manner that will ensure a truly level playing field, enabling developing countries to enhance their supply capacities and to compete with developed countries that have vastly greater resources.

Secondly, the debt burden of developing countries must be expeditiously addressed. Recent measures for the highly indebted poor countries are encouraging, but it should be realized that those countries account for only about 10 per cent of developing countries' debt. The rest is owed by low- and middle-income countries.

Thirdly, the international monetary and financial system needs to be imbued with greater equity and stability.

Fourthly, the persistent decline in official development assistance flows needs to be reversed.

Fifthly, the ability of developing countries to generate and acquire technology must be improved so that they can compete in the global economy.

On our part, despite a difficult financial situation and in the absence of an enabling international environment, we have tried to ensure continued investment in the social sector; we have mobilized additional resources for employment generation and poverty alleviation; and we have strengthened national institutions concerned with social development by enhancing their finances. As a result, investment in the social sector in Pakistan has grown at the rate of 15 per cent per annum. The budget for 2000-2001 reflects an increase of 50 per cent in resource allocation to poverty reduction, especially for the rural areas.

Primary-school enrolment of both boys and girls has increased from 55 per cent in 1995 to 75 per cent in 2000. The coverage of health facilities has been enlarged to include 100 per cent of the basic administrative units in all provinces. A comprehensive and integrated approach to poverty reduction has been adopted through the evolution of a poverty reduction

strategy paper. This is an action-oriented blueprint for poverty reduction. Details on it can be found in the circulated text.

Specific programmes such as the Social Action Programme, the Mass Literacy Programme and the Vaccination Programme to Combat Childhood Disease have been implemented, especially for the poor. The Government is setting up microcredit banks to provide the poor, particularly women, with self-employment opportunities. The Devolution of Power Plan has been developed to ensure the full involvement of the people in their own governance. The philosophy of this bottom-up approach is that all services can be delivered at the local level. The Government has launched an Integrated Rural and Urban Development Programme to create additional employment and income opportunities for the poor.

In order to ensure a meaningful follow-up to the Social Summit, we should focus on measures that would render the global economic environment more conducive to broad-based growth, and that would also assist the efforts of individual countries to meet the basic needs of their people. Instead of seriously addressing these key issues, there is an unfortunate, indeed perverse, focus on devising ways to sanction and punish countries that fail to meet arbitrarily defined social standards. Indeed, in the guise of social concerns, protectionist measures are being vigorously advocated and outright conditionalities are being forcefully proposed. The main motivating force behind these moves is groups that seek to protect themselves from increasing competition from developing countries. The calls for a new social architecture, as articulated by these elements, mask the desire for a new architecture of control, consisting essentially of measures to prevent developing countries from using their comparative advantage to compete in an increasingly open, global economy. The best way to address these concerns is to agree on minimum standards in relevant international forums and to provide the means to progressively implement those standards.

The social goals to which we all aspire are not beyond our reach. A properly structured global economy can provide us with the necessary resources, and a renewed political will can lead to the channelling of these resources, both at the national and international levels, to programmes to improve social

standards. The outcome of our deliberations must reflect forward movement in both these areas.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, Minister of Planning and National Development of Maldives.

**Mr. Zaki** (Maldives): At the very outset allow me to congratulate the President on his election. Permit me also to convey to the Government and the people of Switzerland, on behalf of the members of my delegation and on my own behalf, sincere gratitude and appreciation for the gracious hospitality extended to us and for the excellent arrangements made for this important session.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for their vision and foresight in helping to chart a future course of action towards achieving sustainable social and economic development in the new millennium.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to address the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development in a globalizing world.

Maldives is a small island developing State that looks to the world community with great expectations, especially as regards addressing issues of poverty, social integration and employment promotion, all of which have global dimensions.

In an increasingly globalizing world, integration into the world economy is not an option but a necessity. The Maldivian economy is based on two principal industries, fisheries and tourism, both of which rely almost totally on the international economy for their growth and development. They are also the largest employers and the source of livelihood for the large majority.

The external orientation of the economy and its narrow base renders the country excessively vulnerable to the vagaries of the international economy, which can have direct implications for the people's income and employment prospects. For countries such as Maldives that rely on the international economy for securing all their basic needs, a free and fair international trading environment, without protectionist measures of any kind, is essential in order to achieve sustainable

economic and social development, today and in the future.

In addition to external conditions, Maldives also faces many constraints intrinsic to the country. We are a small island nation with a highly dispersed population. This makes it difficult and costly to provide basic services and infrastructure. A shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour makes it necessary to rely on expatriate labour, which currently makes up more than 27 per cent of the labour force. Lack of natural resources, skilled labour and technology creates serious difficulties in diversifying the economy and reducing external dependencies. In addition, the country's extreme vulnerability to environmental threats creates further cause for concern and alarm.

Despite these constraints, under President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's dynamic leadership Maldives has achieved impressive social and economic progress over the recent period, during which we have sustained a gross domestic product growth rate of about 6 per cent, with low inflation. We have also been able to meet many of the regional and international social development targets. In addition, human resource development programmes are being carried out, and strategic options for national development are being sought to achieve greater economic diversification and increase overall competitiveness.

We are at a critical juncture in our development history. Important gains are being achieved in alleviating poverty, employment creation and social integration. It is important at this time to sustain the development process through increased investment and sound economic management. Thus, we believe that the proposed graduation of Maldives from the list of least developed countries is premature. The graduation from least developed country status at this moment would place the country at risk of losing the gains that have been achieved. The country needs concessional aid and trade now as never before, in order to consolidate the gains we have achieved to launch the country on a path of self-sustained growth and development.

The support and fullest cooperation of the international community is crucially important as we strive to overcome the difficulties and face the challenges of globalization in the twenty-first century. It must be emphasized that greater efforts need to be made to meet the agreed official development

assistance targets and to provide more concessional and grant assistance to least developed countries so that they can sustain development programmes and achieve stability and progress. Furthermore, international cooperation and assistance will also be crucial if we are to address the environmental problems facing small island developing States such as Maldives. I believe the time has come to forge new partnerships in development, partnerships in which the intrinsic vulnerabilities of countries are recognized and appropriate structures are put in place to offer global solutions to global problems.

For our part, I would like to reiterate the commitments we made at Copenhagen: to participate in and lend our cooperation to the global process of development and progress that is being forged at this gathering.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Noëline Jaotody, Minister of Population, Status of Women and Children of Madagascar.

**Mrs. Jaotody** (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): In hosting the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Swiss Confederation is once again confirming its well-known commitment to social development. On behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Madagascar, I am especially pleased to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Government and the people of Switzerland. It is also my pleasant duty to thank them for the very warm way in which we have been received.

Five years after Copenhagen, we are once again gathered to evaluate the progress made, to modify the focus of our approach in the fight against poverty and to improve upon the achievements made in social development. At the dawn of the third millennium, the world has changed, but poverty remains a painful affliction. While commitments have been made, results have fallen short of the objectives set out by the first World Summit for Social Development. The holding of this special session is therefore taking place at the right time and is a vital necessity for the achievement of social development on a global scale.

Our meeting is taking place after the holding in 1999 of several regional mini-summits that met to evaluate the progress made. Their results turned out to be negligible in the face of the scope and impact of the

problems identified at Copenhagen. Our meeting here will therefore bear the heavy burden of finding lasting and effective solutions that will bring about a firm commitment from each of our countries to implement this decisive stage of human life as we enter the third millennium. I believe that the elements of those solutions have already been determined through the outcome of the work of the Preparatory Committee, which was based on the recommendations on lasting human development adopted at various international conferences. However, those proposals will remain simply nice, abstract words without the expression and realization of firm and clear political will from each country.

As far as our country is concerned, in making the fight against poverty the priority objective of its programme of action, the Government of Madagascar has endorsed a set of international commitments, particularly those of the Copenhagen World Summit. On the basis of the Government's priorities and of international commitments, the Republic of Madagascar has since 1996 undertaken a significant number of reform measures, both at the level of institutions and in the area of sectoral and macroeconomic policy, that are aimed at promoting lasting and sustainable economic growth and at reducing poverty. Those measures have begun to bear fruit. The rate of growth, which was at 3.7 per cent in 1997, grew to 4.7 per cent in 1999. That economic performance was accompanied by a steady growth in employment and revenue that brought about a rise in demand. All of these measures and initiatives are being reinforced by the implementation of the framework document on economic policy, which will become the strategy document on the reduction of poverty that will be part of the overall framework of the national strategy to combat poverty.

After the Copenhagen World Summit, pursuing a new consolidated and multisectoral approach for the long term, in 1996 our Government initiated a process of drafting and implementing a national strategy to combat poverty that will become the overall point of reference for all programmes undertaken in the country. In order to do that, four guiding principles have been adopted: strong and lasting economic growth, with the participation of the poor; an economic, institutional and regulatory framework that favours economic growth and the reduction of poverty; the development of human capacity and the reduction

of social inequality; and, finally, the strengthening of the social safety net and protection for the most disadvantaged groups. Well before this effort to establish an overall framework for development and poverty reduction measures began, the various ministries devised and initiated operational and synergy-maximizing plans and programmes with the aim of making their specific measures more efficient and to harmonize their respective actions.

We are also particularly pleased at the joint decision of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to work together to reorient the macroeconomic structural adjustment approach towards a national strategy to combat poverty, which each Government should finalize between now and the end of the year 2000 with the active participation of all the active forces of each country and its development actors. Madagascar has taken this approach since 1997.

In view of the enormous needs facing us, we would like to propose that this session recommend, in order to reach the goal of this initiative, a search for new ways of financing the social sector and influencing economic development policies so that they contribute directly to poverty reduction and to social development. In this regard, we would like to reiterate here the importance of measures to ease the debt burden of developing countries within the framework of strategies to combat the apparently constant growth of poverty that the populations of those countries suffer.

Conversely, debt and its effect on social development programmes constitute one of the many issues that call for a firm commitment from recipient countries to practise efficient and democratic use of power at the national and local levels; to have national and local institutions that respond to the needs of the population and that make it possible for it to participate actively in the taking of decisions on priorities, policies and strategies; and to have an efficient public sector that serves its users.

In the process of developing and implementing the national strategy to combat poverty through different sectoral plans and programmes of action, our Government has endeavoured, in accordance with the Copenhagen text, to bring closely together the different development actors, in particular the private sector, civil society, decentralized collectives and the press. Along the same lines, we would like to recall and stress

the ongoing need to involve populations with the programmes that are relevant to them. It is for this reason that it is imperative for the financial instruments put in place by every institution to be adapted to that reality, and for communities to be able to take decisions directly regarding their development and to keep an eye on the allocation and use of public resources.

With regard to the ways of financing the social sector, we would also like to propose an approach that is consistent with bringing about the social inclusion and reintegration of groups of parts of the population that are marginalized by the economy. More specifically, this should be done by integrating those groups into the system of economic production by way of promoting the goal of full employment. My country would also like emphasis to be placed on the need to establish ways and means to better assist disadvantaged groups to implement their development projects.

Madagascar's message remains illuminated by the glimmer of hope our delegation brought with it to Copenhagen. May concrete commitments emerge from this follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development that will make it possible to reduce poverty in the world and to promote international solidarity for the globalization of a future of lasting human development.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ramatou Baba-Moussa, Minister for Social Protection and the Family of Benin.

**Ms. Baba-Moussa** (Benin) (*spoke in French*): This special session on social development is of vital importance to my country and, even more so, to my Government. But before proceeding, let me thank the Government and the people of Switzerland and the Geneva municipal authorities for the hospitality they have extended to us in their wonderful country, which stands at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations.

The need to find adequate solutions to world concerns that will ensure sustainable well-being for all in an environment of persistent economic and social crisis impelled the United Nations to convene the 1995 World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen. The Government and the people of the Republic of Benin welcome the universal awareness which has mobilized national and international political forces to try to slow and reverse the growth of poverty and the

collapse of social structures, which affect all the world's nations, and to create conditions conducive to sustainable human development and greater social justice. The commitments and measures adopted to those ends should sustain development efforts in every nation.

I am particularly pleased to recall the important meetings at which the war on poverty was the focus of debate: the 1996 Oslo conference on the 20/20 initiative adopted at the World Summit for Social Development; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995, which reaffirmed that initiative, as did the Accra conference on burden-sharing; the World Summit for Children, held in New York; the Libreville meeting of heads of State or Government on an agenda for Africa on the threshold of the third millennium; and the Cologne summit of the Group of 7, which adopted the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, with a view to enabling those countries to benefit from consistent debt alleviation so that they can reallocate resources thus freed to the social sector with the purpose of reducing poverty among the most underprivileged groups.

A review is required in the light of such commitments to promote the well-being of peoples and economic and social development in Africa, so that any necessary corrections may be made. In that connection, my country, the Republic of Benin, has taken action in four areas: progress in reducing poverty and in helping the poorest and most vulnerable groups; progress in job-creation, education and health; progress in the promotion of good governance; and the establishment of a national programme of action for women and children. In 1996, after the Copenhagen Summit, Benin convened a national economic conference, followed in 1997 by an international symposium to study the concept of a common minimum economic and social norm, for which we had opted; this is intended to ensure the well-being of every citizen through a national community development programme. This constituted development at society's foundations, supported by essential social services — to which my country allocates 30 per cent of its budget.

Because of these great efforts, my country, which is already very poor, has lacked the resources to build up its productive infrastructure. That situation is even more desperate now that the globalization of the world economy and the liberalization of trade are exacerbating disparities among poor countries and

widening the gap between rich countries and poor countries, owing to the weakness of the poor countries' structures in these areas. Unfortunately, official development assistance to support the efforts of poor countries has greatly eroded. Consequently, most of Africa's least developed countries have not only been unable to meet their Copenhagen commitments, but have been unable to build a sturdy foundation for economic and social development. These are facts that we cannot conceal — and indeed, must emphasize.

It is important to stress that my country, Benin, in the framework of its initial structural adjustments, gave priority to the re-establishment of macroeconomic balance, to the detriment of basic social services. In spite of the increased budgetary allocations, the additional resources from our development partners and the improved management of the social aspects of development, additional resources are needed to launch a process of eradicating poverty and to make sure it is successful.

The social development of all the men and women of Benin is the goal and the challenge before us. We must take account of parameters relating to transparency, equity and efficiency. The present session should help us find ways and means to make additional resources available to strengthen the capacity of countries in difficulty to provide essential social services.

I sincerely hope that our debate will be successful and enriching, and that it will enable us to consider and assess how to follow up the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit, as well as to formulate new initiatives that will make it possible for the developing countries truly to eradicate poverty. I am convinced that all countries will have to implement the initiatives to be adopted at this session in a spirit of solidarity and regional and international cooperation. In that way we will be able ultimately to achieve a beautiful world unmarked by images of poverty; a dream world which is in fact possible, because it can be formed with the determination and the concerted efforts of all our countries. We shall do it, because we believe in it.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahearn, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs of Ireland.

**Mr. Ahearn** (Ireland): I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and the

appreciation of my Government to the Secretary-General and to the Division for Social Policy and Development for the excellent preparatory work for this session. It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of Ireland and to reaffirm my Government's continuing commitment to social development. I also wish to fully associate Ireland with the speech made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

I want to emphasize how the Copenhagen commitments have helped social development in Ireland, and how fully supportive we are of further initiatives to continue that process. One of the key tasks in the process is to convince people that social development not only improves the living conditions of less advantaged people, but also achieves economic development.

The tangible benefits have been seen in dramatic fashion in Ireland. As our economy has been growing at an unprecedented pace, unemployment is now below 5 per cent and long-term unemployment below 2 per cent. This compares with respective figures of 12 per cent and 7 per cent just four years ago.

Following Copenhagen, a National Anti-Poverty Strategy was put in place in 1997. It included a target of significantly reducing consistent poverty over a 10-year time-frame. Ireland was the first European Union member State to adopt such a global poverty target. In light of significant progress made towards achieving the original poverty target, we set a new target in June 1999 of reducing consistent poverty to below 5 per cent by 2004. Initial findings show that we are well on our way to achieving this new target. We now have the opportunity to effectively eliminate poverty in Ireland, and that must be our main policy objective. The influence of the Copenhagen process was paramount in the development of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

As part of Ireland's latest National Partnership agreement, negotiated between the social partners, we are reviewing and broadening the National Anti-Poverty Strategy to encompass areas which have not been directly included up to now. Existing targets will be reviewed, and new targets will be considered. The original poverty targets were set following extensive and innovative research. One of the most valuable elements of this was a clear demonstration of the deficiencies of looking at income levels alone, be they relative or absolute. The wider approach, which

addresses commonly acceptable standards of living, has proven itself to be both useful and effective.

The involvement of civil society in the process of poverty reduction and social development is becoming increasingly important. We must recognize this and provide an appropriate framework for this to happen. In relation to this, the Irish Government will shortly publish a White Paper on the relationship between the State and the voluntary and community sector.

In the period since 1987, successive National Partnership programmes have been negotiated with the social partners — employers, trade unions, farmers and, recently, the voluntary and community sector. These have created the widespread consensus on social and economic policy that has underpinned the successful transformation of Irish economic and social life.

Our relative success in recent years has been due not only to our own efforts but also to the support and policy guidance we have received from the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations itself, through the Copenhagen process. We were particularly pleased during our recent Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to facilitate the Council's preparation of a pan-European contribution to this Assembly as part of the implementation of the social cohesion strategy. Ireland very much supports regional cooperation on social development, which we have found so useful in Europe, and we would also very much welcome this cooperation developing further at interregional level.

The support Ireland has received internationally in achieving social and economic development has made us very conscious of the importance of such support and of our own obligations to less developed countries. Ireland Aid has been increasing rapidly. We have increased our official development assistance programmes in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Indeed, since the World Summit, allocations have more than doubled, rising to \$241 million in 1999. This represents a volume increase of 22.8 per cent over the previous year. The Irish Government is determined to reach the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overseas development assistance in the short term. The Government is currently considering a detailed financial and organizational road map to

enable us to reach the target within the specific time-frame.

I warmly welcome the fact that this special session will formally endorse the target of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. In order to achieve this target, flows of official development assistance will have to increase from their current levels. We will also have to work harder together to deal with such threats to development as the debt burden on less developed countries and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Ireland has now mainstreamed the fight against HIV/AIDS in its development assistance programme and is devoting additional resources both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The huge burden of external debt on some of the poorest countries in the world impedes social development. I welcome the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, with its promise of broader, deeper and faster relief. However, there remains a worrying shortfall in the funding of the Initiative. Its slow progress in extending debt relief to more than just a handful of countries is also of increasing concern.

Our experience over recent years has shown us that the Copenhagen consensus is the way forward to people-centred, sustainable development that can eradicate poverty and create a stable world order. We are a country whose people have experienced underdevelopment, great poverty and high levels of emigration. We now know from recent experience that it is possible to eradicate poverty if we have the will to do so. This has to be based on national consensus, pursuing the right policies and a supportive international environment.

Ireland, therefore, is fully committed to the Copenhagen process and looks forward to being part of a committed global effort to implement it in the new century.

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Sheikh Falah Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani, Minister for Civil Service Affairs and Housing of Qatar.

**Sheikh Falah Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am particularly happy to pass along a message from His Highness the Emir of Qatar with greetings and wishes for the success of this special session, that it will achieve the expected results.

On behalf of my delegation, I take particular pleasure in extending to the President sincere congratulations on his election to lead this very important session. I wish him every success.

The 1995 World Summit on Social Development took a historic position in facing our countries' and peoples' future in a world undergoing transformation, as well as the challenge of the socio-economic situation being experienced by millions of human beings throughout the world.

*The President took the Chair.*

Today, as we review the objectives and progress made, we see evidence of social and scientific progress and an accumulation of wealth. We are now here to review the objectives we have achieved, taking into account social programmes and the progress made towards social development. But we must note the efforts being made nationally and internationally.

In fact, these problems have become permanent items on the agendas of regional and international forums and the core concerns of peoples and Governments, including in those countries not directly affected by these social problems. This interest has clearly been reflected in social programmes and policies. Here we could mention the examples of economic reform measures, reduction of public expenditures, combat against unemployment and growth of cooperation with organizations and other international bodies to collect international aid and the experience necessary for progress, as well as improving implementation and correction of trajectories so as to achieve the aims we seek.

Every society has its particular features and its own circumstances. For us, in Qatar, the major problem is scarce national manpower in view of the great development projects and service projects. We have therefore given the greatest priority to building a modern industrial base, using available resources. The State is also preparing the material infrastructure for development and is participating in the development of economic and social sectors. With the same impetus, great efforts have been made to develop human resources through a reorganization of programmes and institutions for education and training to better listen to the labour market.

Since we believe that social progress is a matter for all groups of society, particular attention is being

paid to women, who now hold high State positions, including that of Under-Secretary of State; moreover, women occupy academic positions, serve as lawyers and have been elected to municipal posts. In 1998, Qatar established a Supreme Council for the Family because the family is the basic, fundamental unit of society. That council works to strengthen the family and its role in society, and to promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international legal instruments relating to the family. It plays an important role in protecting the family and promoting a variety of family issues. It encourages women to play an effective role in society, and is endeavouring to improve the status of working women.

In recent years, Qatar has thus seen vigorous movement in civil society and in the process of development. Thus, civil-society institutions, organizations concerned with the family and other specialized groups are working to lend impetus to development and to safeguard the gains that have been made. This is in addition to official efforts to build a united, coherent society.

On the instructions of its beloved Emir, the State of Qatar has reiterated its humanitarian commitment to societies throughout the world, whose concerns and problems we share. Regionally and internationally, Qatar is playing an important role through international and regional organizations. It is also participating in humanitarian relief activities and in ongoing humanitarian endeavours to meet its commitment to participation by addressing problems wherever they may arise.

To sum up the situation in global terms, we note that Member States are making tangible efforts to address social problems, and are making progress. But the key problems facing developing countries persist and in some cases are growing worse. In some places, we see poverty, hunger, diseases, unemployment and new social problems, especially among young people. We see ethnic conflicts growing worse, this is a drain on human resources, exacerbates socio-economic problems, and has an impact beyond the conflict zones. There are, moreover, indications that the gap between developed and developing countries is widening, and that there is an increase in poverty, unemployment, debt and other problems on the international agenda as a result of globalization. Although scientific and technological progress is being made and material

wealth is being accumulated, technological symposiums and other activities reaching broad sectors of the population are needed if the desired level of development is to be attained.

I am deeply convinced that this special session, which seeks positive results that will revive people's hope for a better life and a better future, will enable us to move further along that path.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. José Adán Guerra, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

**Mr. Guerra (Nicaragua)** (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the President of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, who is unfortunately unable to be here today, as he would have wished. For Nicaragua, this is a particularly important occasion because it provides an excellent opportunity to assess what has been done and the achievements that have been made since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, with a view to setting new challenges and to confronting the twenty-first century with spirit, determination and solidarity.

Throughout its history, Nicaragua has been harshly afflicted by terrible calamities which have left scars of death and devastation on the nation's family and which have had grave economic, political and, of course, social consequences. But thanks to the enterprising spirit of our people and the firm determination of our Government, we can affirm today that Nicaragua has embarked on a difficult path, but with a clear objective: to achieve sustainable, just and equitable development.

We are today engaged in major structural reforms that are intended to have a social impact on the poorest members of the population. At the same time, we are formulating and implementing complementary programmes that will make it possible to lessen the possible impact of such measures on other sectors. That is a commitment by the Government, which needs the determined support of the active elements of our country: political parties, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Since 1997, our economy has grown by 5.4 per cent a year, and per capita income has also risen by 2.3 per cent. The unemployment rate has fallen from 16 per cent to 10 per cent. Annual inflation has fallen from 12

per cent to 7.2 per cent, and current expenditures fell from 36 per cent of gross domestic product in 1990 to 27.6 per cent in 1999. Exchange rates have remained stable, private investment has increased after nearly 20 years of stagnation, and public investment has grown considerably. We achieved all of this in spite of additional reconstruction costs resulting from the catastrophe caused by hurricane Mitch.

We continue to fight one of the hardest battles we have ever had to wage: payment of our external debt, which has reached \$6.5 billion, the equivalent of \$1,300 per person. In per capita terms, this makes Nicaragua one of the most heavily indebted countries in the Americas. In 1999, debt service equalled 59 per cent of the social budget, and that figure could increase to 62 per cent if Nicaragua fails to obtain debt relief. The Government of Nicaragua has therefore sought the steadfast support of the international community in gaining forgiveness of our external debt, in line with the conditions set out in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

It is important to note that extreme poverty in both rural and urban areas diminished between 1993 and 1998, although we acknowledge that high poverty rates persist. Over the same period, the illiteracy rate fell, and the average number of years of schooling rose for persons over 10 years of age. The statistics for infant mortality and mortality among children under five years of age have improved.

The strategy for strengthening the war on poverty has been carried out in two stages. First, the Government began a broad debate on causes and on possible solutions. In the second stage, interim goals were identified, matching programmes to available resources and developing a participatory system to follow up the progress of these programmes and to assess their impact.

Nicaragua's poverty-reduction strategy rests on three main pillars. The first is to seek broad-based economic growth with an emphasis on the rural sector, which is where the highest proportion of poor people and the greatest concentration of poverty in Nicaragua are found.

Secondly, we are investing in human resources, especially in the vulnerable areas, primarily in the areas of education, health and nutrition, in order to raise people's awareness and to increase productivity and investment.

The third pillar is the strengthening of a system of social protection and assistance that focuses on vulnerable groups living in abject poverty, whose goal in the short term is to ensure their survival and in the long term to put an end to the intergenerational cycle of poverty. All of these efforts include the broad participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

We are aware that it will be possible to carry out all of these activities and meet these challenges only if they are accompanied by resolute and concrete measures. Good governance and transparency in administration are basic and necessary to bring about political and social stability in our countries. Corruption must be combated in a comprehensive manner, and for that reason we have strengthened institutions such as the Office of the Comptroller of the Republic and the judiciary. We have also made significant progress in the decentralization of local governments in order to strengthen their capacity and thereby improve and diversify their services.

In the area of the vulnerability of the environment, we have also made conceptual and institutional headway. Central American countries subscribed, at the twentieth presidential summit, to the Strategic Framework for the Reduction of Vulnerability and Disasters in Central America, which set out guidelines for action in this area and a plan of action to achieve short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

At the international level, we have witnessed the emergence of numerous creative forces, such as the technological revolution, economic liberalization and globalization. It is clear that today it is very difficult to harness these forces so as to achieve peace, development for all and a more equitable distribution of wealth on the basis of international social justice. In the past two decades, increased inequities worldwide have undermined the progress made in the area of income distribution in many developed and developing countries. This growing inequity is perhaps the clearest indication that the dynamic development of the market alone does not guarantee that its benefits are reaped by all.

The Copenhagen Summit, held five years ago, is one of the most significant manifestations of the conscience of humankind, reflecting the belief that equity can be achieved only if it is envisaged as a common goal. It is the need to guarantee that the fruits

of development are widely reaped that has led to the holding of these summits and to the proclamation of what we call "globalization of values", which means the extension to all spheres of the principles of the protection of human rights, social development, gender equality, respect for ethnic and cultural diversity and protection of the environment.

The commitments to be undertaken at this session will be the social challenges of tomorrow and the basis of democratic consolidation in our nations. Therefore its outcome must express the renewed determination of the richer countries to seek ways and means to enable the less developed countries, such as Nicaragua, to achieve the agreed objectives. The creation of a social development fund in which these countries participate along with international financial institutions will no doubt help make it possible for us to progress together towards the achievement of our objectives.

**The President:** I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Albina Assis Africano, Minister of Industry of Angola.

**Ms. Africano (Angola) (*spoke in French*):** It is with great pleasure and satisfaction that we have the honour of addressing this special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of, and outlook for, social development and to the commitments assumed at Copenhagen. We would like also to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding manner in which you are carrying out your duties as President of this session.

The challenges that are now facing social development in Angola — resulting from the commitments assumed by 117 heads of State or Government at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 — are immense, as Angola is struggling to put an end to the instability caused by military conflict in recent years.

Accordingly, our Government, in the context of its present and future governance, is working towards the creation of social conditions conducive to addressing the economic crisis.

Given Angola's current situation, we are endeavouring to put in place various diagnostic measures that will enable us to assess the scope and gravity of the social crisis. We are struggling with serious problems related to the issue of displaced persons, who are just now beginning to believe that it might be possible for them to return home in safety.

These forced internal migratory flows have not made it any easier to take measures to promote the implementation of new economic activities that could generate employment for both rural and urban inhabitants. The major challenge facing our Government at this time is the fight against poverty.

As is well known, this phenomenon has many causes and results each year in a significant shortfall in the domestic product. That is why the elaboration and implementation of strategies to eradicate poverty are among the priority tasks of the Government. This process has already begun.

National teams have been created that are working to gather the information needed to deal with this problem. They are focusing on three main areas: strategies aimed at increasing productivity and employment, strategies to improve the living conditions of the people, and strategies to increase revenues.

It is important to emphasize the programmes that are under way, *inter alia*, the programme granting micro-credits to rural women, and the one aimed at relaunching the productive sector. I would stress also the recent start-up of the Economic and Social Development Fund, intended for the private sector.

The Angolan Government hopes that following the recent signing of a protocol of understanding with the International Monetary Fund intended to re-establish basic macroeconomic equilibrium, the necessary conditions will be created for a stable economic environment, which is key to micro-economic decisions and for the creation of new jobs.

Large-scale actions have also been undertaken in the area of the training and retraining of employed and unemployed workers in order to provide them with the skills necessary to increase household income. With this objective in mind, a programme of assistance for craftsmen has been set up in cooperation with the employment centres. Thus we have made available "toolkits" for carrying out professional activities.

In its ongoing concern to prioritize the streamlining of human resources through improvements in the areas of education and health, the Government has substantially increased the financial resources allocated to those two sectors this year through current expenditures or through investments in

the rehabilitation of social infrastructures, most of which were damaged by the military conflict.

The immediate effect of the war waged by the armed movement in Angola can be seen quite clearly in the number of internally displaced persons in the country. Aware of the harmful social effects and of other types of problems faced by the internally displaced persons, the Government has designed and implemented a national programme for emergency intervention and humanitarian assistance with two closely linked objectives: to provide emergency assistance, on the one hand, and on the other, to carry out activities intended to integrate displaced populations into activities intended to promote their social integration, through the distribution of tools for work. To complement the activities of the national programme for emergency intervention and humanitarian assistance, the Government has undertaken a programme to provide microcredits.

From this rostrum we take this opportunity to thank all those countries that, from near or far, have shown their solidarity and that are providing us with humanitarian aid.

At the end of the last century, when globalization started to become a reality, Copenhagen brought together the developed countries and the developing world. Together we made a commitment to eradicate poverty from our societies. Although we are far from achieving this objective, we are aware that we will achieve it only with cooperation of all kinds and official development assistance. In this new millennium these two factors must be encouraged in our relations. This is why our Government reiterates its support for the principle by which at least 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of the developed countries should be devoted to official development assistance.

In spite of the constraints that Angola is still experiencing, it is firmly committed to guaranteeing all the people access to basic social services. Angola reaffirms its commitment to the 20/20 initiative, while exhorting all countries to commit themselves to achieving this objective.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and all its members on the excellent job done in preparing this special session of the General Assembly. We are convinced that the objectives set by the Assembly will be achieved, so that at a subsequent session entrusted

with examining the progress that has been made on the new commitments many delegations will be able to submit encouraging reports regarding the real elimination of poverty.

**The President:** I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lee Jong-yoon, Vice Minister, Ministry of Health and Welfare, of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Lee (Republic of Korea):** The historic commitments made by heads of State or Government in 1995 were solemn pledges. The principles and promises contained in the commitments have provided guidance and constitute strong ethical and moral imperatives for all of us who are endeavouring to realize a society for all.

However, an assessment of the world situation indicates that, while progress has been made in some areas, not all countries have been successful in this task. Significant gaps remain within and among countries. Divergent economic growth is evident, and inequalities still persist in various forms.

No doubt globalization has generated benefits on a wide scale. However, it has also been disruptive for a large category of people in poorer countries with weak and underdeveloped economies, unskilled labour forces and vulnerable groups that lack the capacity and resources to exploit new opportunities.

To ensure that globalization also stimulates socio-economic development, I believe that the benefits of globalization should be better distributed among groups that have been excluded, so that we can be justified in our hope that twenty-first-century globalization will be beneficial for people from all walks of life and for countries at all levels of development.

It is with this in mind that I hope this special session will tailor appropriate strategies and define ends and means to tackle the challenges confronting us.

I take this opportunity to share with the Assembly the experience of the Korean people, an experience that reflects both the pitfalls and the promises of the new global environment. The 1997 financial crisis struck Korea and left many Koreans jobless. But the crisis was also an opportunity to review certain structural flaws in our economic and social systems. More importantly, it has reminded us of the importance of policies for the vulnerable groups in our society, to

which we have not paid full attention in the development process.

As measures to overcome these difficulties, the Korean Government has introduced and applied the concept of "productive welfare". For poverty eradication, the Government enacted the National Basic Livelihood Security Act in 1999 and expanded the coverage of the national pension scheme nationwide. The Government has actively implemented policies to create jobs and to provide assistance for small businesses. For social integration, policy measures have been taken to eliminate regional differences and to strengthen social welfare for the underprivileged, such as the aged, the disabled, women, children and the homeless.

In order to enhance efficiency and to establish a collaborative relationship for social development between the public and private sectors, bold structural adjustments and regulatory reforms have been implemented. Furthermore, the proportion of the national budget devoted to national health and welfare has also been continuously increased, even despite limited resources.

Thanks to the Government's efforts and collaboration with the private sector, the Korean economy was able to recover rapidly from recession. We are now more able to build a stronger legal and structural foundation for social safety nets than ever before.

Let me turn to obstacles that are still impeding our efforts to promote continued social development around the world. An increasing number of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises are disrupting even the basic capability of many countries to engage in social development. Diseases such as HIV/AIDS, organized crime, drug abuse and chronic famine should be addressed by implementing more active and coordinated measures. Technical assistance programmes should be enhanced, and official development assistance for developing countries needs to be maintained.

It is of the utmost importance that we confront these challenges collectively in a more coordinated manner. The whole United Nations system should be involved. Developed countries and developing countries should do their parts at the national, regional and international levels. The world trade system and the monetary system also have to take this noble

endeavour for social development into consideration in establishing and implementing their policies.

As stipulated in the 1995 Declaration, the responsibility for social development falls on individual States. Therefore, it should also be pointed out that it is of great importance for individual States to make their social and economic systems stable, efficient and fair. In this sense, the protection and promotion of human rights, good governance and fundamental freedoms are prerequisites for each country's efforts for social development. I hope this session will remind all parties here of the importance of their respective roles in social development, as well as renew and strengthen the cooperative relationship among them.

In March of this year, the Korean Government hosted a policy dialogue at Seoul entitled "Seoul Forum: towards new prosperity and harmony for Asia-Pacific economic cooperation". The Korean Government is confident that the Forum provided an invaluable opportunity for countries to share their particular responses to recent economic crises and to devise ways to continue the work of social development.

At the international level, the Korean Government will continue to increase its official development assistance to developing countries. That assistance has been expanding since 1995. Despite the financial constraints placed upon us by the economic crisis, the Republic of Korea will try to fulfil the commitment we made at the World Summit for Social Development to provide technical training to people from developing countries.

Social development is a multifaceted concept. It calls for a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the full range of overlapping challenges that confront us at this critical juncture. To achieve our goals in the context of globalization and in the midst of many obstacles, all countries and groups must find the courage to reach beyond their own interests and join in an integrated partnership for social development. Korea, for its part, is resolved to elaborate its social development policy and expand cooperative relationships with international partners for the continued implementation of the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Irena Boruta, Under-Secretary of

State, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Poland.

**Mrs. Boruta (Poland)** (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of this special session of the General Assembly on social development. I join all the previous speakers who expressed their gratitude for the holding of this session on such an extremely important topic.

Allow me now to give some details about the status of Poland's implementation of the provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, as well as to express our thoughts as to the possibility of accelerating social development in our country.

Faced with numerous challenges, such as those of transition, globalization and European integration, we in Poland have begun activities to fight poverty and to promote full and productive employment and social integration. Additionally, between 1999 and 2000, four essential reforms were undertaken: the reform of the social security, health and educational systems, as well as the decentralization of power. We have already seen some success in these reforms.

With regard to the retirement system, its reform was achieved after a difficult period of formulating a concept of reform. That reform is based on the unambiguous concept of increasing individual responsibility in order to ensure income during old age. In anticipation of this, we have also developed a clear concept of social assistance.

Alongside successes there are always setbacks. Unemployment continues to be a problem. Other problems include increasing material inequalities, the exclusion of certain social groups, diminished access to education by young people who are poor or from rural areas, difficulties at times in getting access to health care, and the varying development conditions at the local level.

What needs to be done in Poland to bring about a better response to the expectations of the Copenhagen Summit and of this special session of the General Assembly?

First of all, the cause would be well served if we could arrive together at a single concept of the social aspect in the market economy, redefining the basic functions of the welfare State in the face of transition and globalization. It would be going too far to say that

a single, clearly defined model for social policy is being implemented in our country today. With regard to public and private resources, we are currently developing a mixed welfare-State model that gives public support in the form of financial relief and special subsidies and the like to private institutions providing social services. This approach is aimed at a "third way" that will make it possible to combine the State's overall responsibility to provide the necessary measure of social security with increased individual responsibility. Nevertheless, the process of defining the proportion of public and individual responsibility will be neither easy nor quick.

In the future, it would be better to decide at the outset on the social model to be adopted than to let such a model come together bit by bit. The key is to outline the ways to solve basic social problems.

Secondly, one of the actions that will be undertaken in Poland on behalf of social development is the continued development of a basic, universal concept that will determine how changes will be made in the different areas of social policy. This is particularly noteworthy with regard to putting in place reforms in the areas of education and health services.

Moreover, carrying out the Copenhagen commitments and making efforts for social progress in Poland are being greatly aided by the ongoing development of social dialogue and the development of non-governmental organizations. In connection with the latter, greater importance should be given to the development of civil society — a process that may well benefit from the decentralization of State functions and structures.

Poland affirms its political will to pursue the achievement of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. We share the belief that those documents lay the foundations for social development for the years to come. Solving the problems I have mentioned in Poland will be our contribution to a speedier realization of the concept of social development.

**The President:** I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ali Saleh Abdullah, Deputy Minister for Social Affairs of Yemen.

**Mr. Abdullah (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*):** I would like to begin by saying that it is a pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. President, on presiding over this

special session of the General Assembly. This session, which coincides with the new millennium, has as one of its tasks evaluating the implementation of the 1995 Copenhagen commitments.

It is my pleasure also to convey the greetings of the entire political leadership of Yemen represented by His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdullah Saleh, President of the Republic. Our thanks go to the Swiss Government for all the facilities needed to convene this special session. We acknowledge the important efforts of the Secretary-General, and we thank him for his statement, which set out new ideas for addressing the problem of poverty and overcoming the obstacles to social development.

The Republic of Yemen — which was peacefully united in 1990 through the free will of its people, and which has chosen democracy, comprehensive development, the protection of human rights and a multi-party system of government — has since 1995 been eagerly implementing a programme of financial and administrative reform and the restructuring of the national economy. It has been adopting financial, economic and monetary policies intended to address imbalances and other economic and social problems. It has adopted laws intended to create an appropriate environment for private-sector activities, to promote market mechanisms, to encourage local and foreign investment and to create a climate that will effectively foster civil-society institutions. Those measures have been welcomed by all relevant international institutions.

Yemen has made tangible progress towards economic stability, towards curbing the erosion of the national currency and correcting numerous price, monetary and trade imbalances, and towards achieving a relative improvement in employment opportunities and in reducing unemployment, providing women with additional opportunities to participate actively in social and economic activities and to be included in the various sectors of our society.

The five years since the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development have seen greater focus on the social aspects of development, which are now being given pride of place. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes has led to many social problems: the portion of the population living in poverty has grown to 21 per cent; poverty now affects many new social categories and strata. For that reason,

poverty eradication is a key objective. A variety of social security networks work to alleviate poverty, to create job opportunities, to encourage the creation of small income-generating businesses, to foster popular participation and to promote social integration. The economic and social situation remains difficult, and people continue to suffer. The Government of Yemen is doing all it can to overcome these problems, in cooperation and coordination with donor countries and international financial institutions.

Yemen's commitment is reflected in the fact that it has created a number of social security institutions. Our social development fund, established in 1997 with capital of \$80 million, provides job opportunities and helps create small businesses. It has undertaken 1,190 projects over the past three years; 41,930 people have benefited from those projects. In 1996, we set up a social assistance fund with capital of \$45 million; it helps 350,000 poor people. Public works projects involving small businesses have led to the creation of 63,000 jobs. Our national programme for the productive family helps poor women acquire new skills and had been of benefit to some 12,000 trainees through 1999. In 1998 we initiated a national employment programme with capital of \$42 million; its goals are to reduce poverty, to promote social development on a regional basis and to establish a complementary system for assembling data on poverty and the labour market.

These efforts reflect the Government's determination to keep fighting poverty. We intend next to establish a bank for the poor, to assist the poorest sectors of society, mainly young adults and women. All of this is accompanied by other investment and development projects and social-assistance programmes encompassing new categories: helping disabled, elderly and young people; supporting mothers and children; and increasing school enrolment especially among girls. For this we have allocated \$75 million as part of our commitment to meeting development and societal needs.

In the health field, provision of basic services has increased; over the past three years we have been carrying out a programme to vaccinate millions of children. The political circles in Yemen are committed to democracy, participation and equality, concepts that have led to the adoption of a number of national strategies, most important among them the national population strategy and those relating to women,

mothers and children, to education for girls and to fighting illiteracy. This has created a degree of social contentment and has improved equality of opportunity among the various members of society. Over the past five years, civil-society institutions have played an important role, along with the State, in promoting construction and development. Some 2,500 associations benefit from a variety of privileges.

The democratic process over the past five years culminated in the holding of free and fair parliamentary elections, in which the population participated along with political parties and organizations, among them some 15 parties. In 1999, the first democratic presidential elections were held.

The local authority law has been promulgated for administrative decentralization purposes. My country attaches great importance to the protection of human rights and the eradication of differences and violence, as well as the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and international conventions for the rights of the child.

Finally, the implementation of the Social Summit resolutions has reflected our great commitment to these resolutions and requires our meeting to objectively evaluate the process, either at the local or international level. Proposals must be put forward to improve future implementation, particularly of financing policies and the mobilization of resources, the development of control and follow-up systems, widespread transfer of expertise, new forms of communications and the opening of markets. In addition, we wish to mention the banning of wars, unstable political and security situations, natural disasters that increase poverty and unemployment and all situations that hinder social integration.

**The President:** I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, Chairperson of the delegation of Turkmenistan.

**Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (spoke in Russian):** It is a great honour for me, speaking on behalf of Turkmenistan, to address the world community gathered together here today, one united in common anxiety, common hope and a common desire to make our a world a more just, humane and spiritually better place. We can have and do have the right to adhere to different political views, choose different economic models and pursue different ideologies. However, any

individual political idea, even the most noble one, is worth nothing if it does not find room for a common individual's everyday thoughts about daily bread, a roof over his head and the dream of a dignified, quiet and peaceful life. There are billions of people deprived of all this.

The problem that we face is crude and concrete. That problem is: what should be done — and how should it be done — to alleviate the lot of not only individual segments and categories of people taken together but also entire nations and continents where deprivation and suffering have become a way of life? I am convinced that we all understand the serious nature of this problem and that we cannot transfer its burden to the shoulders of future generations.

Turkmenistan belongs to the category of developing nations. Furthermore, it is a neutral State that, by virtue of this status, does not accept any imposition on anyone of ready-made socio-economic and political models of development. Nonetheless, permit me to espouse in general terms Turkmenistan's approach to issues on the agenda of today's meeting, proceeding from the experience of every country that undoubtedly is useful for all of humankind, the opportunities for interaction among States in this respect and the practical application of life-proven schemes.

At the time of its independence Turkmenistan was one of the least developed national entities of the former Soviet Union which experienced to the fullest extent possible the heavy burden of unjust distribution of resources and the effects of the application of the principle of residual financing to social programmes. On top of it all there was a psychological atmosphere of ideological and social uncertainty. Against this background you would understand what it meant for the common people when the State, during the first days of its existence, promulgated a policy of unconditional supremacy of social development and social protection of the entire population. Although we had rather modest financial resources at the time, we channelled them towards ensuring a dignified life for the people, safeguarding them against poverty and deprivation.

The State introduced and has maintained fixed prices for 24 staple products, including bread, flour and dairy products. As regards an additional 500 products and services, mainly foodstuffs, fuel and transport

tariffs, these prices can be changed only by means of a decree by the head of State. Turkmenistan maintains a system under which some food products allocated for low-income families are supplied directly to these families virtually free of charge. We maintain regulated prices on State housing, utilities and public transportation. Our citizens do not have to pay anything for gas, electricity, drinking water and salt. We maintain free education and public health services. The State allocates 40 to 50 per cent of its budget to social needs. We have often been criticized for this, with the critics blaming us for a lack of market thinking; but it is thanks to this approach that Turkmenistan, a country that had the most unfavourable start-off conditions on the eve of the reforms, managed to avoid social conflict. It is thanks to this approach that we have managed to ensure social stability, and the people have confidence in the reforms being undertaken.

Emphasis on social support of the family is the cornerstone of our social policy. Turkmenistan has established strong guarantees aimed at protecting motherhood and childhood. Reforms of the system of education and vocational training for future generations are currently being carried out.

To sum up, this is what we have in our country: our citizens, regardless of their property status, know that they have a place to live, that society will help them, that the children will get an education, that they do not have to be concerned about the health of their children, their families or their own health. The State gives the people a feeling of being involved in society's life; it guarantees them their dignity by helping them to develop as all-round individuals.

All this does not imply that Turkmenistan has solved all the problems relating to social development. There are still quite a few such problems, and we are open to discussing them from any angle. We are ready to engage in cooperation with international organizations and specialized bodies of the United Nations. Turkmenistan intends to further strengthen international cooperation that has proven its effectiveness. We are convinced that internationalization of social problems requires internationalization of efforts for their solution. It means that no single country has the right to wall itself off from problems causing concern in the whole world.

When it comes to ensuring sustainable social development in Central Asia, and progress and the well-being of its peoples, regional cooperation becomes especially relevant. Today in Asia we see formation of a stable system of regional interaction as represented by the Economic Cooperation Organization, through which major regional transportation and communication projects are being carried out to bridge the gap between the economies of European and Asian countries and to overcome the technological gap between them and to establish an equitable system of trade and economic relations between North and South.

Turkmenistan is making enormous efforts to deliver energy commodities to international markets. Construction of transregional and transcontinental pipelines is an imperative need of the times and a real and most effective way to overcome the deepening energy crisis and to eliminate disproportions in distribution and consumption of resources, as they are fraught with the danger of social explosions in the States deprived of those resources by their undermining of the foundations of security at national and regional levels. Pipelines mean new work places; they mean light and heat in houses. I am convinced that the contours of Euro-Asian security along the South-North and East-West lines, contours of a future belt of stable nations undergoing sustainable development, will run along the routes of future pipelines. In this sense, the construction of pipelines means not only profitable projects but also projects of social development on a large scale which go far beyond national borders.

Present-day social problems and the global dimensions they have acquired call for mobilization of all of humankind's resources, the political will of world leaders and the harmonization and coordination of action for the solution of these problems. Our task — the task of all members of the international community of nations — is to devise a model of interaction that corresponds to the new realities of international development and the new challenges of the times.

It will be possible to cope with them only by consolidating our efforts and by using modern non-discriminatory and equitable technologies. There is no place today for political blackmail and diktat; aid cannot be made contingent on the infringement of the sovereign rights of nations. It is that approach which Turkmenistan has always advocated and continues to

advocate, and it is that approach which corresponds to my country's political philosophy.

**The President:** I give the floor to Mr. Mordechai Mordechai, Director-General, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Israel.

**Mr. Mordechai (Israel)** (*spoke in Hebrew; English text provided by the delegation*): This special session has been convened to tackle issues that have troubled mankind since the dawn of history. Thousands of years ago, the Bible was already teaching us that the poor would always be with us in the land and was commanding us to be open-handed with our charity. But the Bible did not regard charity — the readiness of the rich to give to the poor — to be the solution to the problem of poverty and income-distribution. It commanded that all assets should be redistributed once every 50 years, during the jubilee year, and that everything should start over again.

Five years ago, the countries participating in the World Summit for Social Development were less grandiose, and assumed a series of obligations in the area of national and international social development. Those obligations focused on eradicating poverty, finding an appropriate response to disadvantaged populations, expanding employment and searching for a delicate balance between economic and social development. I believe that every country has drawn upon the best of its resources and intellectual capacities to accomplish those tasks and to meet the challenges laid down by the Copenhagen conference.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the short time that has transpired since the conference and the limited resources available have prevented Governments from completely fulfilling the recommendations and goals with respect to social development. The data before us today indicate that we have a long way to go to attain the objectives we set for ourselves. Tens of millions of children around the world suffer from malnutrition, while at the same time the wealth accumulated by a small number of individuals is enormous and is approximately equal to the gross national product of dozens of poor countries. More than a billion people live on less than one dollar a day, in contrast to the three richest people in the world, who are "worth" more than the gross national product of dozens of the poorest countries.

Income distribution is becoming increasingly unequal, not only between countries but also within

them. In Israel as well, I regret to report that in recent years poverty has increased, and social gaps have not been reduced in a significant way. On the one hand, Israel is part of the new economy, with its high-technology companies leading the way in important technological fields. Our gross national product has grown, due mainly to our ability to join the new economy. On the other hand, more Israelis are left behind, and do not enjoy the fruits of growth; too many do not find work.

That is one of the expressions of the change that has taken place in the social development of Israel since the founding of the State. We have changed from a society under siege, which placed emphasis on collectivity and common realization, to a society which places emphasis on individual rights and self-realization.

The State of Israel is proud of its achievements in the area of social development. In the last decade, Israel has absorbed a million immigrants, most from the former Soviet Union and from Ethiopia. Most of those immigrants are now integrated in Israeli society and in its cultural, political and economic life.

In spite of the ongoing security burden, Israel has turned into a modern welfare State, and the readiness of its citizens to support that welfare State has not diminished. To the contrary, our progress in many areas continues. For almost a decade, Israel has been spending more on social services than on security. Social legislation continues and expands its protection of vulnerable populations such as women, mothers, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Life expectancy in Israel is one of the highest in the world, with every Israeli being covered by the health insurance law, which provides a large basket of health services. Educational levels have steadily risen. More and more Israelis have access to higher education as well as to special educational services.

Nevertheless, we know that the real solution to the increase in poverty and unemployment is not the development of more social services and more social legislation. Rather, it is investment in education for better integration in the workplace. As early as 900 years ago, Maimonides wrote that the highest level of charity is to give people a vocation by which they can support themselves with independence and dignity.

The preferred model is not that of rich people maintaining poor people through their contributions, but that of a society based on decent work relations, where most people realize their full potential and support their families through their work. With that in mind, social institutions are responsible for developing responsive social arrangements and effective methods for the integration of needy and disabled groups in the workplace. We wish to remove hundreds of thousands of Israelis from the cycle of poverty not by making payments to them but by a reasonable minimum wage that would prevent more Israelis from falling below the poverty line. We do not seek to come to terms with rules of the economic game that endanger social solidarity, but to find solutions that combine growth and economic policy with employment and social goals, together with integration and social development.

Israel is a country with a relatively small internal market. The process of globalization is having a major effect, widening socio-economic gaps and limiting opportunities for weaker economic groups. Therefore, we ask to be full partners in the international community's efforts to find ways to integrate economic development and growth with social development, full employment and the eradication of poverty and illiteracy.

We believe that the international community and its major institutions must find ways to give expression to the interdependence of economic and social policies and to assist countries in examining these issues as a whole. We believe that tools and measures must be developed to examine the social ramifications of economic initiatives, and to evaluate products, output and productivity in social terms.

Israel would like to be a pioneer in the development of modes and methods of regional cooperation in the areas which are at the core of the deliberations of this special session. We aspire to true cooperation with Arab countries and with others in our region, for the benefit of the social development of all peoples of the region. All have wasted too much energy and resources in areas that compromise social development, forestall the reduction of poverty, limit the advancement of education, and postpone the eradication of illiteracy.

The time has come to work together to achieve full employment, economic growth and social

development for all peoples of the region. Israel has proved that it is ready to take meaningful steps in order to advance this goal.

Peace will bring an end to the hostility between peoples only if we are able to establish a network of neighbourly relations which promotes economic prosperity and social development.

The international community can play a major role in the economic and social development of this region.

**The President:** I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Intisar Al-Wazir, Minister for Social Affairs of the Palestinian Authority.

**Mrs. Al-Wazir (Palestine) (spoke in Arabic):** Allow me, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of Palestine, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of this special session. I should like also to thank the Swiss authorities for hosting this session.

This session is being held as humanity is entering the third millennium under radical international changes — politically and economically. The globalization process has been intensified due to the revolution in communications, technology, transportation and information. Our world has become a small global village with common concerns and common future.

Today, the world is confronted with great strategic and existential difficulties and problems. A collective effort is required on the part of the international community to find the appropriate solutions. These problems include the existence of weapons of mass destruction worldwide, which threatens the very survival of humanity; an increase in ethnic, religious and regional armed conflicts; the arms race; the unsustainable and irrational use of natural resources; and environmental pollution, all of which pose a threat to human life, the ecological balance and the interests of future generations. They also result in inequities in international economic relations and in a widening gap between the rich developed countries of the north and the poor developing countries of the south, where 80 per cent of the world's poorest live. Debt problems are exhausting an important part of the resources of poor countries, thereby seriously hampering their development. In addition, there are the problems of desertification, hunger, HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, addressed very important issues essential to the lives of all peoples, at the forefront of which are the eradication of poverty, the elimination of unemployment and the promotion of social integration. The developments that have taken place since the Summit, including the Seattle events, indicate that the situation worldwide has not improved as had been envisaged at that Summit. The Copenhagen Programme of Action has not been fully implemented. Poverty has increased fivefold since then, as stated by the United Nations Secretary-General. Unemployment is on the rise, and social integration has been severely elusive in many countries due to ethnic, religious or national intolerance, marginalization and the weakening, or absence, of democracy.

The Palestinian people are still struggling for their right to self-determination; the establishment of their independent democratic Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital; and a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which guarantees their right to return to their homes and compensation for the material and moral losses they have suffered over the past 50 years.

The Palestinian leadership has consistently reaffirmed that peace is a strategic choice. In this regard, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed a five-year interim accord with the Israeli Government, which ended a year ago without the full implementation by successive Israeli Governments of what has been agreed upon, under international supervision.

At the same time, the Israeli occupiers are continuing their policies and practices of land confiscation, building and expansion of settlements, building of bypass roads, uprooting of trees, demolition of houses, violation of human rights, disassociation of Palestinian cities and villages, Judaization and isolation of Jerusalem, confiscation of identification papers of Palestinian inhabitants in Jerusalem, imprisonment of Palestinians, and response to Palestinian protests with live ammunition, as well as humiliation of Palestinian citizens.

Furthermore, Israel still controls Palestinian natural resources, including 80 per cent of the Palestinian water supply. It is deepening the

dependence of the Palestinian economy on the Israeli economy in all aspects, such as production, consumption, export, import and the labour market.

While Israel refuses to implement the interim agreement, signed with the PLO, particularly with respect to the withdrawal from Palestinian territory and the establishment of safe passages between the West Bank and Gaza, it continues to manoeuvre and delay negotiations on permanent solutions to the problems of refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, boundaries, sovereignty and water. It refuses to go back to the 4 June 1967 boundaries, prevents the return of Palestinian refugees and refuses to discuss the issue of Jerusalem. It seeks the annexation of settlements and rejects the creation of an Arab-Palestinian territorial continuum, in total violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III). International pressure must be brought to bear at the official and grass-roots level to force Israel to comply with international resolutions in order to reach a balanced, comprehensive and just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Palestinian people live in a politically and economically complex situation, which in turn creates a negative social environment. More than 25 per cent of the Palestinian people live below the poverty line. Unemployment is around 12 per cent. There are 120,000 Palestinian workers who work in the Israeli market; they lose their jobs in case of closures. Economic growth indicators are weak due to the lack of investments, which in turn is due to the absence of security and the stalemate in the peace process. It is very difficult to achieve genuine social development while under occupation, with total dependence on the Israeli economy, without freedom of movement for goods and people within Palestine and with the outside world. All of these factors greatly affect our capacities in implementing economic and social policies for development.

In spite of this difficult and negative situation, the Palestinian National Authority has enacted legislation in the political, economic and social fields. There are 30 laws that play an important role in the creation of a legal environment for the social, economic and political development of the Palestinian society, and a number of new bills are pending ratification. Legislative and presidential elections were also held

under international supervision. The relationship between the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations is being regulated. A Ministerial Committee has been established to promote good governance. In order to achieve transparency and accountability, the Palestinian Authority is laying the foundation of political pluralism and promoting democracy and freedom of expression. It has also developed a national employment strategy in Palestine to alleviate and gradually eliminate unemployment and to promote full employment. However, Israeli policies remain an obstacle to achieving genuine development in the Palestinian economy.

The Palestinian Authority is also working to enhance national policies to combat poverty by moving from relief to development. It provides assistance to 30 per cent of poor families and gives special attention to the handicapped, newly released prisoners and the elderly. The Palestinian Authority also strives to achieve equality between men and women through legislation that takes the gender issue into consideration in development planning. Special attention is being given to the reconstruction process in Palestine, through the rebuilding of the infrastructure destroyed by the Israeli occupation. At the same time, this process is aimed at strengthening the social fabric by paying special attention to education, health, sanitation, clean water and the environment.

With its continued occupation of Palestinian land, Israel impedes social integration, especially as its policies are aimed at isolating Palestinian communities from one another. The Palestinian National Authority is striving to integrate returnees into Palestine and will devote great efforts to integrating more returnees in the future.

Our main conclusion is that there can be no real development under occupation. The basic condition for achieving real social development in Palestine is the establishment of the Palestinian independent democratic State with Jerusalem as its capital, the return of all refugees and the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions. This requires a concrete international mechanism to implement those resolutions and to support the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their national rights, so that peace, security, freedom, justice, equality, economic prosperity and social development can prevail for the Palestinian people, for all the peoples of the region and throughout the world.

We wish this special session on social development the greatest success.

**The President:** I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Hussain (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic):** My country has asked to take the floor in exercise of its right of reply to respond to what the representative of Kuwait said regarding missing persons. We would like to clarify the following points.

Iraq has complied with the relevant international resolutions regarding missing persons. Iraq turned over all Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other prisoners of war immediately after the hostilities ended. Iraq was cooperating with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Tripartite Commission on missing persons until United States and British authorities launched a massive attack on Iraq in December 1998. The United Kingdom and the United States are members of the Tripartite Commission. After that attack it became impossible for the Commission to continue its work, as those two countries had no missing persons to be looked for. Their continuing membership in the Commission highly politicizes its activities; the Commission was used only for political purposes and to maintain the economic embargo on Iraq.

Iraq has consistently affirmed that it is continuing to look for its own missing persons — 1,150 Iraqis — and to trace Kuwaiti missing persons in cooperation with the ICRC, as well as with any other interested parties. This is a humanitarian issue, and Iraq does not have any interest whatsoever in putting off a final resolution of this problem. On the contrary, Iraq also has missing persons, and we, too, would like to know what happened to them.

**Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan):** Regrettably, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan is obliged to take the floor after the biased and distorted statement made by the representative of Armenia. It is a well-known fact that for more than 10 years Azerbaijan has been suffering as a result of aggression by neighbouring Armenia. Twenty per cent of our territory has been occupied as a result of this aggression.

Armenia is responsible for the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated by its armed forces during this aggression. Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis, including women, children and the elderly, have been killed, maimed or wounded. More than 1 million Azerbaijanis — or one in every eight residents — have been forced to live in unbearable conditions in refugee camps, railroad cars and other temporary shelters. Under these circumstances, Azerbaijan is making the utmost efforts to mitigate the negative impact of the aggression and to meet the minimum social-service requirements of this sector of the population.

Despite the suffering and hardship caused by the aggression, the Government of Azerbaijan is determined to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. Therefore, the Armenian statement evokes only a smile and demonstrates once again that Armenia is trying to avoid responsibility for acts it has perpetrated.

**Mr. Peleg (Israel):** I regret and I am disappointed that the Palestinian representative used this General Assembly special session, which is dealing with very important issues and very important challenges to the international community, to make a political statement, which has no place here. Most of that speech was irrelevant to the issues that all of us have been discussing here these past few days.

I do not intend to refer to the facts mentioned by the Palestinian representative. Many of them are not true, and many of them are taken out of context. But let me say just this: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will not be solved here. It will not be solved at the United Nations in New York. It will be solved — and I trust it will be solved soon — in negotiations, direct negotiations, between Palestinians and Israelis, between my Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Chairman Yasser Arafat. In these negotiations, it is clear, both sides will have to take substantial and painful decisions.

The only way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli issues is through direct negotiations regarding employment, works, health and many other issues. I would encourage my Palestinian partner in this march for peace to work bilaterally, to work with us. I am sure, and I trust, that we will agree on a settlement of our conflict that will be satisfactory to both Palestinians and Israelis and will mark a further step in the peace process in the Middle East and thus in trying

to ensure the peace, prosperity and welfare of our region.

**Mr. Al-Askar (Kuwait)** (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to comment on what was said by the representative of Iraq.

The question of Kuwaiti missing persons and detainees in Iraq is not new. It goes back 10 years, to 2 August 1990, when the Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait in an act of aggression without precedent since the Second World War. We are talking here about a human tragedy for more than 600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war and other persons held in Iraq, about whom no one has had any information since the liberation of my country in February 1991.

What the representative of Iraq said was just pretence. We are not talking here about weapons of mass destruction being used against neighbours or people. We are talking about human beings, innocent people kidnapped from streets, houses and mosques during the occupation of Kuwait. If Iraq were seriously trying to solve this purely humanitarian problem, it would not have boycotted the Tripartite Commission or the Technical Subcommittee under the coordination of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), whose last meeting was held last week in Geneva.

Denials that there are missing Kuwaitis in Iraq are not to be believed. We have learned from our experience with the regime in question that we cannot trust it or believe its claims. It has always tried to shrug off responsibility for its commitments, although it is a signatory to the United Nations Charter and other international instruments and has accepted international humanitarian law and Security Council resolutions 686 (1991) and 687 (1991). Iraq should be committed to implementing those resolutions and to respecting the will of the international community, as reflected in the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly calling on it to return all Kuwaiti and other citizens to their homes. It should return all persons detained during the occupation of Kuwait.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2000/347) submitted to the Security Council in accordance with paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999) requests Iraq to immediately free, under the supervision of the ICRC, all Kuwaiti and other citizens, to return the bodies of all those who died, and to cooperate fully with the ICRC in this regard. However, this has not been done.

From this forum we call on the international community to continue applying pressure on Iraq to release Kuwaiti and other prisoners of war, as well as to release information as to their fate. This should be a moral and humanitarian commitment, not only a political one.

**Mr. Ghadiyeh (Palestine)** (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to confirm that the statement by Palestine was fully consistent with the daily suffering of the Palestinian people during their long history. The Palestinian people have lived under the oppressive occupation of Israel for over one third of a century. The fact of the matter is that what was said in that statement constitutes only a small part of the reality prevailing in our country, in which Israel carries out all types of political, economic and military oppression against our people.

I wish to add that the General Assembly and all other international institutions have a very important and substantial role to play in solving this problem between us and the Israelis, in the context of bilateral and multilateral negotiations under the auspices of the international community. The agreements made between us and Israel were not reached just bilaterally, but under international auspices.

The problem that has frozen things is the militant Israeli mentality in connection with the occupation. Israel does not want to implement resolutions of international legitimacy emanating from international institutions.

**The President:** I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply. Interventions are limited to five minutes.

**Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq)** (*spoke in Arabic*): Iraq's statement will be very brief. We would like to clarify some basic realities concerning the question of missing persons.

First of all, my delegation agrees with what was said by the representative of Kuwait: that this issue is a humanitarian one. But some aspects of it differ in some respects. The Kuwaiti regime continues to politicize this subject for many reasons, but primarily to continue to perpetrate the embargo and siege on Iraq.

As is well known, missing persons are the tragic result of all wars. We in Iraq have double the number of missing persons that the regime of Kuwait alleges it

has. We are anxious to deal with this problem, in the right context and as quickly as possible.

Yes, we have stopped dealing with the Tripartite Commission. But why did we stop? Because there are parties in that Commission that perpetrated military aggression against Iraq for four days, resulting in 500 civilians dead, over 1,000 persons injured and with the concomitant loss of property and destruction of infrastructure. Is it then logical to expect us to meet again with the countries that perpetrated that aggression against us, and that do not even have missing persons, to solve the problem of missing persons? No, I do not believe so.

I would like to say on behalf of the Government of Iraq that we are now ready to enter into negotiations of any kind, with any relevant committee or within the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) committee, to deal with this humanitarian problem. We would wish to sit down with countries that have or claim to have missing persons; but the inclusion of countries with no missing persons, which are trying to prolong the embargo and to exploit the situation for political reasons, impinges upon the sovereignty of Iraq and makes this a political problem.

**Mr. Peleg (Israel):** I am sure that the Palestinian representative knows that by now 99 per cent of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza live under the control of the Palestinian Authority. And surely, the social issues and concerns of those Palestinians should be dealt with by her ministry in the Palestinian Authority. I think, frankly, that the time has come for the Palestinian Authority to look inward instead of complaining all the time to the international community and trying to initiate resolutions condemning Israel, and to ask themselves how things are going within the Palestinian Authority. What about good governance? What about transparency? What about human rights?

Let me conclude by re-emphasizing and reiterating that Israel is ready to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority; Israel is ready to assist the Palestinian Authority in every possible field, because we believe that there is an interrelationship among economic prosperity, social prosperity and political stability. We are interested in all three.

**Mr. Al-Askar (Kuwait) (spoke in Arabic):** Once again, unfortunately, we have heard the representative of the Iraqi regime make false allegations. He said that

he was different. True, we are not like the Iraqi regime in the way we deal with countries or individuals. He said he had cooperated with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but that is untrue, as has been noted in all relevant documents. He said that it is we who are politicizing this issue; but he has now said that he would not participate in the work of the tripartite committee so long as the United States and the United Kingdom were participating in it. He said that there are twice as many Iraqi prisoners of war as Kuwaiti prisoners of war. This is a humanitarian question, not a question of numbers, whether dozens, hundreds, thousands or millions. The families of these missing persons are waiting for their sons, their fathers, their loved ones.

He also said that all conflicts result in issues of missing persons. But who started this war? That is the question that should be asked. Who invaded Kuwait? Who was responsible for such treatment of civilians and non-civilians during the war? Is Iraq not a party to the fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War? Ought not Iraq to be committed to implementing conventions on the treatment of civilians in time of war or under occupation, and on the return of prisoners of war at the end of hostilities?

I shall not speak of Iraq's terrible human rights record, which is well documented and well known. Representatives know perfectly well what that record is like. During its seven-month occupation of my country, the Iraqi regime treated my people in the worst possible way. That regime continues in the same way; it has not changed at all.

All we ask is that Iraq be forced to comply fully with all resolutions of the Security Council. We think that this would solve many of the problems facing us.

**Mr. Ghaddya (Palestine) (spoke in Arabic):** The representative of Israel knows that 99 per cent of the Palestinian people are in fact under the civilian control of Israel, not of the Palestinian National Authority: the Israeli military could attack the homes of more than 70 per cent of Palestinians. He knows that, as a Palestinian, I need a permit to go from Gaza to the West Bank, and that I am not allowed to visit Jerusalem at all. If I wish to go abroad, I must seek a permit from Israel or remain in Israel.

The representative of Israel knows very well that thousands of prisoners remain in Israeli jails. He knows

that military occupation should have ended in 90 per cent of Palestinian territory. But the reality is that the military has withdrawn from only 20 per cent of that territory. He knows that the safe passage to the north is not open, and he knows that there is no freedom of movement for merchandise or for imports and exports outside Israel.

How can the Ministry for Social Affairs solve the problems of Palestinians in such a complex economic, political and security situation? We do not need the representative of Israel to teach us any lessons about democracy and transparency; we know that Israel faces such problems itself. If Israel is so proud of being democratic, how can it be so racist towards other peoples?

*The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.*